

SCDNR SEA TURTLE CALENDAR

All Months

- Direct the public to use the [online form](#) to report casual, live sea turtle sightings
- Report dead or injured turtles to the hot-line number 1-800-922-5431 or our office 843-953-9015

January

- Watch out for cold -stunned sea turtles
- [Loggerheadlines](#) newsletter is published

February

- [STNMS](#) Online Training Webinar (as needed)
- [STRAND](#) Online Training Webinar (as needed)
- Watch out for cold -stunned sea turtles
- [Leatherback](#) nesting season begins as early as February 25th in the Caribbean and Florida. The first leatherback nest in SC in 2012 was April 17th

March

- Stranding Response Spring Training Mandatory Meeting (Date and Location TBD; may be in April)
- Nest Protection Spring Training Mandatory Meeting (Date and Location TBD; may be in April)
- Submit permit renewal application online
- [Leatherback](#) nesting season begins as early as February 25th in the Caribbean and Florida. The first leatherback nest in SC in 2012 was April 17th

April

- Stranding Response Spring Training Mandatory Meeting (Date and Location TBD; may be in March)
- Nest Protection Spring Training Mandatory Meeting (Date and Location TBD; may be in March)
- Beach-nesting birds start laying eggs in mid-April. Nests can be laid in sandy dunes, open beaches, or the edge of marsh grasses. Be very careful during bird nesting season to watch for and avoid disturbing nests.
- April 28, 2014: New moon 8:22 pm high tide is 6.5 feet and a good time to mark your spring high tide line.
- Both juvenile and adult [loggerhead](#) turtles are returning from their foraging areas as coastal waters warm up. Adult females are coming from feeding grounds as far away as New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina. A smaller percent have foraging grounds to the south in Georgia and Florida. They will mate with males about 30 days before they lay their first nest. Mating usually takes place offshore, but some have been seen in coastal waters.
- [Loggerhead](#) stranding numbers begin to increase mid-April
- [Loggerhead](#) nesting begins in Florida during second or third week of April
- Check to make sure beach markers are intact
- Organize supplies for the upcoming season (nest markers, signs, screening material)
- Schedule your nest protection project organizational meeting
- Adult and juvenile [leatherback](#) sea turtles are starting to move through the near-shore waters

May

- In mid-May, shorebird chicks begin to use the open beach between their nests and the waterline. They also like to hide in tire tracks when scared. Please be extremely careful to drive slowly and watch carefully for small, cryptic chicks. They can be found anywhere on the beach.
- [Loggerhead](#) nesting season begins May 1. Adult females will begin to nest about mid May. The first loggerhead nest in 2013 was on May 12th. They will lay an average of 112 eggs per nest about every two weeks. They lay about four clutches per season, or approximately 500 eggs. Do not disturb nesting females. Turn out all exterior lights visible from the beach and do not allow interior lights to shine onto the beach.

- List of project participants due May 1
- New, first and last quarter moons (look out for disoriented nesting females)
- [Kemp's ridley](#) juvenile stranding numbers begin to increase as they begin feeding on crabs in estuaries and near-shore waters. Some may get caught on fishing hooks at piers.
- [Green](#) sea turtle juvenile stranding numbers begin to increase as they begin feeding on algae in estuaries
- [Green](#) sea turtles begin nesting in Florida during the last week of May
- Georgetown Blue Marlin Tournament (<http://govcup.dnr.sc.gov/> for dates)
- [Leatherback](#) sea turtles are migrating through South Carolina near-shore waters
- Commercial shrimping season opens late May or early June (<http://www.dnr.sc.gov/licensing.html>)

June

- [Green](#) sea turtles begin nesting in June in Florida. The first green sea turtle nest laid in SC in 2013 was June 9th
- Peak of loggerhead nesting season. Remove any beach furniture and/or tents from the beach before dark so that nesting females do not become entangled. Fill in any deep holes on the beach that children may have dug during the day to keep nesting females and hatchlings from becoming trapped at night. Nests must remain undisturbed during incubation, which is about 60 days.
- [Kemp's ridley](#) juveniles are feeding on crabs in estuaries and near-shore waters. Some may get caught on fishing hooks at piers.
- [Green](#) sea turtle juveniles are feeding on algae in estuaries
- New, first and last quarter moons (look out for disoriented nesting females)
- Bohicket Marina Invitational Billfish Tournament (<http://govcup.dnr.sc.gov/> for dates)
- Charleston Carolina Billfish Classic (<http://govcup.dnr.sc.gov/> for dates)
- [Leatherback](#) sea turtles finish migrating through South Carolina near-shore waters
- Commercial shrimping season opens late May or early June (<http://www.dnr.sc.gov/licensing.html>)
- Continue watching for bird nests and chicks.

July

- Peak of nesting season
- Sea turtle nests begin hatching. It is now even more important to keep lights off. Report any illegal lights to the local sea turtle project leader or the local authorities. Do not pick up hatchlings or stand between them and the ocean. They need to see the flat horizon of the sea and its reflected light to orient properly. Once they enter the sea, they will swim continuously for 24 to 36 hours, called the "swimming frenzy" to reach the Gulf Stream currents which will take them to the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.
- Remind project participants to wait at least three days before inventorying a nest
- [Kemp's ridley](#) juveniles are feeding on crabs in estuaries and near-shore waters. Some may get caught on fishing hooks at piers.
- [Green](#) sea turtle juveniles are feeding on algae in estuaries
- New, first and last quarter moons (look out for disoriented nesting females and hatchlings)
- MEGADOCK Charleston Billfishing Tournament (<http://govcup.dnr.sc.gov/> for dates)
- Edisto Marina Billfish Tournament (<http://govcup.dnr.sc.gov/> for dates)
- Continue watching for bird nests and chicks.

August

- New, first and last quarter moons (look out for disoriented nesting females and hatchlings)
- Nesting is ending. As soon as the female lays her last nest for the season, she begins her migration back to the foraging grounds. This may take her several weeks, depending on the distance. From the rate of travel, about 2 km per hour, it appears that she is still not stopping to feed yet. It's no wonder that they have to spend several years on the foraging grounds until they have replenished their bodies and are ready to nest again.
- [Kemp's ridley](#) juveniles are feeding on crabs in estuaries and near-shore waters. Some may get caught on fishing hooks at piers.

- [Green](#) sea turtle juveniles are feeding on algae in estuaries.
- Beach-nesting birds finish laying eggs in late-August. Continue watching for chicks.

September

- Hatching is winding down, but lights may still be a problem.
- New, first and last quarter moons (look out for disoriented hatchlings)
- Begin proofing online data and correcting errors
- [Kemp's ridley](#) juveniles are feeding on crabs in estuaries and near-shore waters. Some may get caught on fishing hooks at piers.
- [Green](#) sea turtle juveniles are feeding on algae in estuaries.
- Chicks are no longer utilizing beach habitat beginning in late September.

October

- New, first and last quarter moons (look out for disoriented hatchlings)
- Stranding numbers begin to decrease
- As near-shore water cool down, loggerhead juvenile turtles are moving offshore or to the south for the winter. Unlike the nesting females, they tend to return on an annual basis. It takes 12 to 15 years for hatchlings in the open ocean to reach the size of the juveniles we have here in coastal waters. It will take another 12 to 15 years for these juveniles to reach adulthood and start to nest.
- Volunteer Appreciation and Post Season Workshop (date TBD)

November

- Reports for nest protection projects are due November 30 (reporting guide <http://www.dnr.sc.gov/seaturtle/volres/reportrequirements.pdf>)
- Some [leatherbacks](#) may be seen in near-shore waters

December

- Annual report for permits to hold sea turtles in captivity are due December 31
- Watch out for cold -stunned sea turtles